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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TBILISI 001418

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DEPT FOR DAS BRYZA, EUR/CARC, IO/UNP, AND IO/PSC

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [KPKO](#) [UNSC](#) [RU](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE BY FRIENDS OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL TO
TBILISI AND SUKHUMI

REF: TBILISI 459

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (a), (b) & (d).

11. (C) Summary. The Friends of the Secretary General (FSG) delivered a demarche, as agreed in capitals, to the Georgian Government on June 4 and to the Abkhaz de facto authorities in Sukhumi on June 8. The demarche pressed both sides to calm tensions, re-engage in dialog, implement confidence building measures, and participate in a Geneva format meeting to discuss further steps. The Georgian side responded that they are open to all forms of dialog without pre-conditions. However, the Georgians would not participate in a Geneva format meeting in New York and offered no indication that they would close or move the Patriot Camp located near the conflict zone. The Abkhaz side responded that they will not participate in any meetings until the Georgians remove the Government-in-Exile from the Upper Kodori Gorge (UKG) and convert the police there to local hire. End Summary.

The Georgians Want to Meet Without Preconditions

12. (C) The Friends of the Secretary General (FSG), represented by the German, French and U.S. DCMs and the Russian Ambassador, delivered the demarche as agreed to in FSG capitals to the Georgian Government on June 4, represented by Deputy Foreign Minister Manjgaladze and Deputy State Minister for Conflict Resolution Abashidze. Manjgaladze reiterated the Georgian position that they are ready to meet with the Abkhaz at any time and at any level without pre-condition, including a meeting between President Saakashvili and de facto president Bagapsh, and that the Georgians remain committed to the confidence building steps agreed to at the Geneva meeting in February (reftel). But Manjgaladze said that the Abkhaz have shut down all dialog, adopting a new strategy of total non-engagement. He mentioned as a latest example the Abkhaz refusal to attend a meeting with the EC even though the time and place had been agreed. He pressed the FSG to encourage the Abkhaz to return to talks without pre-conditions. Regarding the UKG based Government in Exile, Manjgaladze said it is not in exile any more and would not be removed. He restated that Georgia has a responsibility to provide civil administration in the UKG and any Abkhaz concerns about treaty violations should be properly applied to the UN.

13. (C) Regarding the disappearance in February of local Abkhaz election official David Sigua, Manjgaladze said the Georgians had nothing to do with it and are just as interested to learn what happened. He said that the Georgian side proposed to the Abkhaz to conduct a joint investigation but the Abkhaz have not responded. The FSG pressed Manjgaladze on the need to name a coordinator for law enforcement cooperation, as agreed in Geneva, and Abashidze

replied that they were waiting for UNOMIG to provide a document defining the framework and rules under which this cooperation would work. (Comment: The FSG position is that cooperation on law enforcement does not require a UNOMIG document. In a separate meeting on 6/11, Special Representative to the Secretary General Arnault said he hoped that he could convince both sides to restart the Quadrapartite Meetings on law enforcement cooperation by the expected June meeting in Geneva. End Comment.) The FSG pointed out that the Patriot Camp opened near the conflict zone can be perceived as a provocation and encouraged the Georgians to move the camp. Manjgaladze responded that it is a children's camp and he cannot understand how the Abkhaz can claim it is some kind of threat. He said the camp was opened there as an effort to provide attention and normalcy to a neglected area. He offered no indication that the Georgians would move or close the camp.

14. (C) Manjgaladze said that the Georgian side supports a Geneva format meeting with the Abkhaz but would not agree to participate in a meeting in New York. He said the Abkhaz would use a NY meeting for propaganda reasons and to take another step on the path to legitimacy, but would not engage in any substantive discussions. He asked why we would want to hold the meeting in NY: what benefit does that offer over Geneva? Manjgaladze said that Shamba had a central role in the ethnic cleansing that took place in Abkhazia in 1994 and it would be immoral to give him a bigger stage in NY. He pointed to a disturbing law recently passed by the de facto parliament as an attempt to legalize the ethnic cleansing and deprive the IDPs of any property rights in Abkhazia. Manjgaladze concluded by stating that the Georgian side is still expecting a final report on the Joint Fact Finding Group investigation into the March 11 attack on the UKG.

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Abkhaz Heels Are Dug In

15. (C) The Friends of the Secretary General (FSG), represented by the German and Russian Ambassadors and the French and U.S. DCMs, delivered the demarche the Abkhaz on June 8, represented by de facto president Bagapsh and de facto foreign minister Shamba. Bagapsh appeared angry and belligerent as he railed against President Saakashvili and Georgian duplicity, citing the disappearance of Sigua, the Patriot Camp near the conflict zone and Saakashvili's media hype over the Abkhaz release of 3 Georgian students last month. He said the Abkhaz will not meet with the Georgians again until the UKG issue is resolved. He wanted to see the Government-in-Exile removed, an agreement reached on the number of police, the police converted to local hire, and UNOMIG and the PKF given a permanent presence in the UKG. He saw no value in meetings because the Georgians won't deal with Abkhaz concerns such as ending the economic embargo or non-use of force guarantees and there is no one sensible in Tbilisi with whom to talk.

16. (C) Bagapsh was clearly angry that Saakashvili responded to the release of the Georgian students in May with a media spectacle, pinning medals on their chests on national TV, rather than by calling Bagapsh to thank him for the release. He said he released the students because of a direct appeal from the Russian MFA, but he wouldn't have agreed if he knew how the Georgians would respond.

17. (C) Bagapsh said that locating a Patriot Camp near the conflict zone is a clear provocation by the Georgians. He predicted trouble, said he has moved more Abkhaz militia to the area and requested that UNOMIG and the PKF monitor the situation. The FSG told him that escalating the situation and increasing tensions helps nobody. Bagapsh claims that the FSG mention was the first he heard of the Georgian offer of joint investigation into Sigua's disappearance. When

pressed by the FSG, he said he might consider a Joint Fact Finding Group investigation.

¶8. (C) Bagapsh said the Abkhaz would not participate in a Geneva format meeting because there have been no results from the last Geneva meeting in February. When the FSG said we would recommend to USG Guehenno that he issue the invitations to such a meeting and encouraged the Abkhaz to attend, Bagapsh would make no commitment.

¶9. (C) During the two hour meeting, Bagapsh dominated the talking with bombast and threats. Among the threats: he would block all movement across the Enguri Bridge, install mines and barbed wire along the border, shoot down any Georgian helicopters that go to UKG, build an Abkhaz camp adjacent to the Georgian Patriot Camp. He said that Abkhazia would never return to Georgia even if no one recognizes Abkhaz independence. He seemed bothered to have to meet with the FSG at all.

¶10. (C) The Russians orchestrated a bold media sham at the meeting. At one point during the meeting the lone television camera set up to film only the Russian Ambassador, ignoring the rest of the FSG. On cue, the Russian Ambassador announced that he was speaking for the FSG and reiterated that the FSG told the Georgians to close the Patriot camp, to be forthcoming with information about Sigua,s disappearance, and to implement the confidence building measures provided by the FSG.

¶11. (C) The FSG took the opportunity to inform the Abkhaz about the serious threat posed by the spread of African Swine Flu (ASF) in Georgia, which was first detected in the Zugdidi area near the Abkhaz border. Both Bagapsh and Shamba said they have never heard of ASF and they are not aware of any pig deaths. The Embassy has encouraged the Georgian Government to share information about ASF with the Abkhaz.

¶12. (C) Comment: The lack of coordination between Bagapsh and Shamba was notable. For example, Bagapsh was unaware that the U.S. Ambassador had discussed with Shamba the idea of a joint Sigua investigation during his visit May 23, or that Georgian State Minister Antadze had called Shamba about it. Twice when Bagapsh appeared to consider meetings with the Georgians, Shamba interrupted to say that meetings would not be possible until the UKG and other issues are worked diplomatically first, via an exchange of documents. Bagapsh was also surprisingly uninformed about Georgia. He declared that conditions in Georgia are so bad that if its neighbors opened their borders to Georgian emigration, 30% of

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Georgia,s population would stream out looking for work. The German Ambassador responded that we live in Georgia and it,s now a very different place than he imagines. Bagapsh said that,s because of the limited, rich circles we associate with; he had been to Georgia before and he assured us that we are misinformed. End comment.
TEFFT